

# MEMOIRS

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## CONTENTS.

	<i>Page</i>
<b>BAINBRIDGE, R. B.</b>	
The Saorias of the Rajmahal Hills .. .. .. .. ..	43
<b>GRUVEL, M. A.</b>	
Cirrhipèdes Operculés de l'Indian Museum de Calcutta .. .. .. .. ..	I
<b>HARI NATH DE.</b>	
Tarikh-i-Nusratjangi .. .. .. .. ..	121
<b>HAYDEN, H. H.</b>	
Notes on some Monuments in Afghanistan .. .. .. .. ..	341
<b>HOFFMANN, REV. FR. J., S.J.</b>	
Mundari Poetry, Music and Dances .. .. .. .. ..	85
<b>JACOB, S. M., I.C.S.</b>	
On the correlations of areas of matured crops and the rainfall .. .. .. .. ..	347
<b>ROSS, E. DENISON, PH.D.</b>	
A polyglot list of Birds in Turki, Manchu and Chinese .. .. .. .. ..	253
<b>WALL, F., MAJOR, I.M.S., C.M.Z.S.</b>	
A monograph of the Sea-Snakes .. .. .. .. ..	169
<b>WALSII, E. H. C.</b>	
The Coinage of Tibet .. .. .. .. ..	II
<b>WATSON, E. R., M.A. (CANTAB), B.Sc. (LOND.).</b>	
The fastness of the Indigenous dyes of Bengal .. .. .. .. ..	.. 25 & 155

*Notes on some Monuments in Afghanistan.*

By H. H. HAYDEN, *Geological Survey of India.*

THE MUNÁRS NEAR KABUL.

Masson's detailed researches on the subject of the Afghan topes, published in Wilson's "*Ariana Antiqua*" (1841), leave little for subsequent travellers to add. This, indeed, is fortunate, since the state of preservation of the topes and other monuments both about Jalalabad and at Yakhdara near Kabul is now very inferior to what it was in Masson's day. A few, however, still survive, and, of these, the most striking are the two columns known as the *Munár-i-Chakri* and *Munár-i-Surkh*.

The *Munár-i-Chakri* (Plate xi) is one of the most conspicuous landmarks in the neighbourhood of Kabul. It stands on the Kotal-i-Munár, a pass over the high ridge crossed by the short cut from Kabul to Khurd Kabul and at about eight miles to the south-east of the former place. It has already been described by Masson,<sup>1</sup> but the figure given by him does not give a very accurate idea of the upper part of the column. His drawing, however, shows the curious bulge on the north-western side of the pillar; this is very marked in the original, and is quite noticeable in the photograph now reproduced. This bulge is due to the fact that the upper part of the column leans over to the south-east, a defect which probably dates from the time of its construction, as there is no evidence of recent displacement. The height of the column is about 105 feet; this estimate is based on the height of a stick, 5 ft. long, placed against the tower and photographed with it; it consequently only gives an approximation to the true height, which is probably somewhat greater.

A fact which appears to have escaped Mr. Masson's attention is the considerable use of timber in the construction of this Munár. Ends of wooden beams can be clearly seen at the first projecting course, and other beams have been used, though more sparingly, in the main mass of the masonry.

A regrettable feature will be noticed in the illustration now published: this is the dilapidated condition of the square base on which the pillar stands. Owing to

The Munár-i-Surkh has already been described by Masson, and I only mention it here in order to correct an obvious slip to be found on page 56 of Fergusson's *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (1876) and which evidently escaped the author's notice. In his description of the Munárs near Kabul, Fergusson refers to them as the Chakri Munár and the Surkh Munár, and publishes a woodcut purporting to illustrate the latter and said to be taken "from a drawing by Mr. Masson in Wilson's 'Ariana Antiqua'". Masson states in his description of the Munár-i-Surkh (*op. cit.*, p. 114), that "its upper parts have fallen beneath the injuries of time": when Masson saw it, it was evidently in the same dilapidated state as at the time of my recent visit; only a portion--probably representing about two-thirds of the original structure—is still standing; this consists of a plain cylindrical column capped by a projecting course similar to that seen at rather less than two-thirds of its height in the illustration now published of the Munár-i-Chakri. On the other hand, Fergusson's woodcut represents a pillar in a very good state of preservation, and also resembles closely the Munár-i-Chakri. In his reference to his woodcut, "Munár-i-Surkh" is evidently, therefore, merely a slip for "Munár-i-Chakri." Curiously enough, however, his woodcut differs considerably from the illustration given by Masson on Plate ix of *Ariana Antiqua*, from which it purports to be taken.<sup>1</sup> It is clearly not a copy of Masson's figure, yet a comparison of both with the photograph now published shows the Fergusson's woodcut is the more accurate of the two!

#### BUDDHIST CARVINGS AT BÁMIÁN.

The Bámíán caves and carvings have been described by many writers, beginning with Hiuen Tsiang, who visited the valley nearly thirteen hundred years ago (between A.D. 629 and 645). Notes on them have also been published at various times in this Society's journal; *viz.*, by Burnes in 1833 (vol. ii, 561), and by Masson in 1836 (vol. v, 707). Subsequently in 1839, Bámíán was visited by Dr. W. Griffith (Posthumous Papers: Journals of Travels in Assam, &c., edited by J. McClelland (1847), p. 389). Both he and Burnes give illustrations of the principal figures; these were drawn from rough sketches and with the exception of a photograph of one of the figures taken by Mr. A. Collins and reproduced in Dr. J. A. Gray's "My Residence at the Court of the Amir" (1895), p. 144, no photographs have, I believe, been published.

There are at present altogether five statues in Bámíán, three of which are in the main valley at Taibut. Plate xii gives a general view of the cliffs of Tertiary conglomerate on the left side of the valley and shows the two chief niches, one at either end,

The fifth statue, which is the recumbent one and which I had not an opportunity of seeing, is at Azhdahár on the right side of the Bámián valley above Taibut.

Plate xii shows the numerous caves in the cliffs at Bámián ; some of these are now used as barracks, others are occupied by the local peasants, whilst many are empty. Similar caves are to be seen in many of the smaller valleys in the neighbourhood.

Hiuen Tsiang describes the statues as being of great beauty ; the largest, he says, was 140 or 150 feet in height, whilst " its golden hues sparkle on every side and its precious ornaments dazzle the eyes by their brightness."<sup>1</sup> It is difficult, however, to identify them from his description of their situations, but the two large ones, to which he refers as statues of Śakya Muni, are presumably those in the principal niches illustrated on Plate xii, while the recumbent figure that he describes as being in a monastery to the east of Bámián, may be that at Azhdahár, " east " having been accidentally used instead of " west." At the time of his visit they were all evidently in an excellent state of preservation, since Buddhism then prevailed throughout the whole of Afghanistan, and a consideration of the extreme smallness of the remnants now left of the many statues, monasteries, stupas and viháras described by him leaves one appalled at the barbarism displayed in their ruthless destruction by subsequent conquerors.

The illustration now published (Plate xiv) is from a photograph of the largest figure, which stands in the niche seen at the left side of Plate xii. That published by Dr. Gray is from a photograph of the figure in the niche at the opposite end of the same plate. The sizes given for the largest of the figures vary considerably, ranging from 120 feet (Burnes) through 135 feet (Griffith) and 140 to 150 feet (Hiuen Tsiang) to 173 feet (Gray). Unfortunately I had not an opportunity of taking measurements, but I should be inclined to accept Dr. Gray's figure, *viz.* 173 feet. The heights given by the older Mahomedan historians are evidently only approximate.

Burnes, when he visited Bámián, was told the same fable with regard to these carvings as is repeated at the present day ; according to this, they represent, the largest one a male, the next a female, wife of the large one, and the smallest, which is in a niche between the two large ones, their child. Both Burnes and Masson failed to realize the true nature of these carvings, but Griffith, probably as a result of his travels in Burma and Bhutan, at once recognised them as of Buddhist origin.

The frescoes above the heads of the two principal figures are now much dilapidated ; those over the smaller statue appeared to be better preserved and are in parts

## CUP-MARKS IN BÁMIÁN.

On the descent from the Ak Rabát Kotal to Bámián, and at about one-and-a-half mile below the top of the pass, two large blocks of limestone have rolled down from the small scarp above the road, and lie at the side of the footpath. Both of these are covered with cup-marks on the side next the path. On the top of each block is a heap of pebbles and several of the cups contain small stones. Many of the marks are quite fresh and show signs of recent excavation. It is, therefore, clear that the present Mahomedan inhabitants still continue to hollow them out as they pass by.

The question of the origin of cup-marks has been dealt with at some length by Mr. E. H. Walsh, I.C.S., in a Memoir published by this Society [vol. i, 271 (1907)]. My observations throw no further light on the matter. The people of Bámián have apparently no idea of the meaning or origin of the marks, and, when asked, merely say that the place is a "ziarat" and that a holy man presumably died on this spot. When he died or who he was they do not know, and there is no trace of anything resembling a grave.

Plate xv shows old cups below and freshly-cut ones, with pebbles in them, above. The other block, on the left-hand side of the picture, is covered with more numerous and much finer cup-marks, but when I saw it, I had unfortunately used my last film and was unable to photograph it.

It is interesting to find customs of this kind surviving in a Mahomedan community so strictly orthodox as that of Afghanistan, but this is by no means the only instance of the kind. Throughout the hill-country of Bámián and Saighán it is quite usual to find the hill-tops and passes crowned by cairns in which one is tempted to see a survival of the Buddhist "lá-dse" (လာ-ဒ္ဓေ) of Tibet. The cairns may be heaps of stones on which are planted sticks with white flags attached, or they may be built-up piles of horns of ibex and wild sheep. None of these, so far as I could ascertain, have any historical legend attached to them, although they are classed under the comprehensive term "ziarat." They are in just the places in which in Tibet one would confidently expect to find a "lá-dse" erected in honour of such local deities as inhabit passes and mountain-tops. As in Tibet, too, solitary trees beside the mountain-streams are hung with flags and their branches adorned with horns, and although more rigid enquiries than I was able to make might elicit a story of some legendary saint, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the devout Mahomedan, who strokes his beard as he passes by, is unwittingly doing homage to the tutelary deity whose simple shrine has survived the iconoclasm that destroyed the more pretentious monuments erected to the founder of Buddhism and defaced the magnificent carvings in the valley of

such a keen delight. On a terrace on the hill-side, at the upper end of the garden, and overlooking the scene of many a joyous carouse, stands Bábar's grave, and lower down is a small mosque erected to his memory.

Both mosque and tomb are of white marble from Maidán. The main portion of the mosque (Plate xvi) is of great beauty, but it is enclosed by an untidy railing of rusty iron rods, and is characteristically disfigured by a sloping roof made from old kerosene-oil tins and painted a brilliant blue.

The tomb (Plate xvii) also suffers from its immediate surroundings, planted as it is in the middle of an untidy, flagged courtyard and with a common white-washed *chirágh-dán* for background ; the site, however, with the garden immediately below it and, in the distance, the snow-capped heights of Paghmán, is no doubt just the one that Bábar would have chosen.

The inscription on the tombstone has been read under the superintendence of Dr. E. D. Ross, to whom I am indebted for the following note :—

"The Emperor Babar, after a life of continuous excitement, vicissitude and adventure such as has fallen to the lot of only a few of the great heroes of history, died in Agra on the 6th of Jumāda I, 937 (December 20th, 1530).<sup>1</sup> He was, according to local tradition, temporarily buried in the Rāmbāgh on the left side of the river, about two miles above the present Railway bridge.<sup>2</sup> According to Ferishta he expressed in his will a desire to be buried in Kabul. His body was, however, left in Agra till after the battle of Kanauj in 945 (1538) when Humayun and his family were driven out of India, and Babar's widow, Bika Begum, performed the pious duty of removing her late husband's body to Kabul.

"Babar's tomb is still to be seen in Kabul ; Plate xvii shows his tombstone bearing an inscription, and Plate xvi the mausoleum erected to his memory. It will be seen that these monuments bear a very modern appearance, especially the latter. With the aid of a glass the inscription on the tomb has been read, and is now printed, I believe, for the first time. Ferishta says that Babar was buried near a place called Qadam Rasul.

"The inscription runs as follows :—

بادشاہی کو جیونش تافتے نور الہ *	آن ظہیر الدین محمد بود بابر بادشاہ
با شکوه و دولت و اقبال و عدل و داد و دین *	داشت از توفید—ق و فیض و فتح و فیروزی سپاہ
عالم اجسام را بگرفت و شد روشن روان *	بهر فتح عالم اروح چون نور نگاه
شد چو فردوسش مکان رضوان ز من تاریخ جست *	گفتمش فردوس دایم جائی بابر بادشاہ

' He commanded a force composed of Divine Bounty, Grace, Victory, and Triumph.

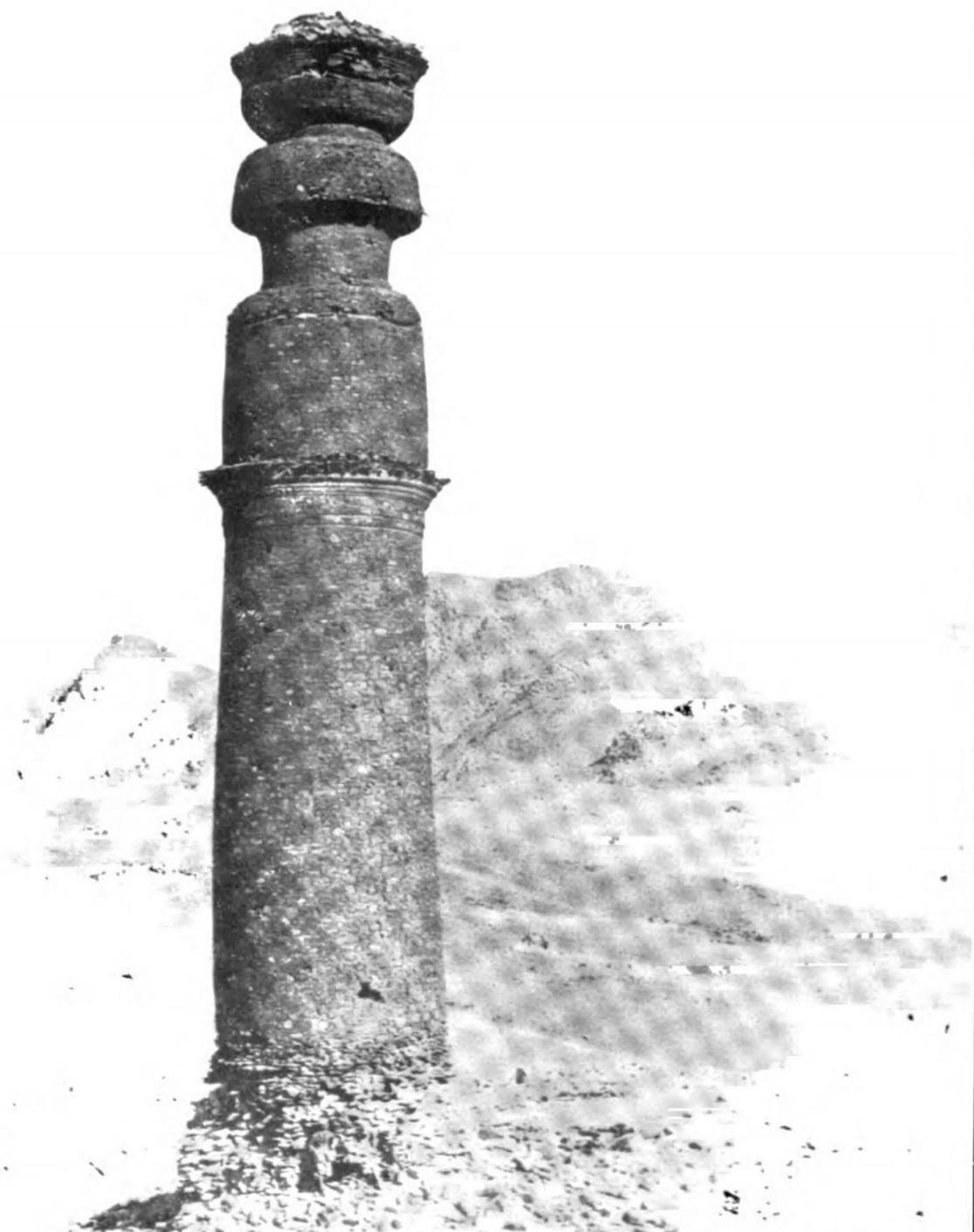
' He seized the world of bodies and became bright souled

' For the conquest of the world of souls he became like the light of the Eyes,

‘When Paradise became his dwelling, *Rizwán* (the doorkeeper of heaven) demanded of me a chronogram.

' I replied : Paradise is for ever the abode of Babar Padishah.'

The words *Firdaws dá'im jái-Bábar Pádisháh* give the date A.H. 937.”









BAMIAN FROM THE SOUTH: showing the cave dwellings and niches containing rock carvings. The niche slightly to the left of the centre of the plate is empty.

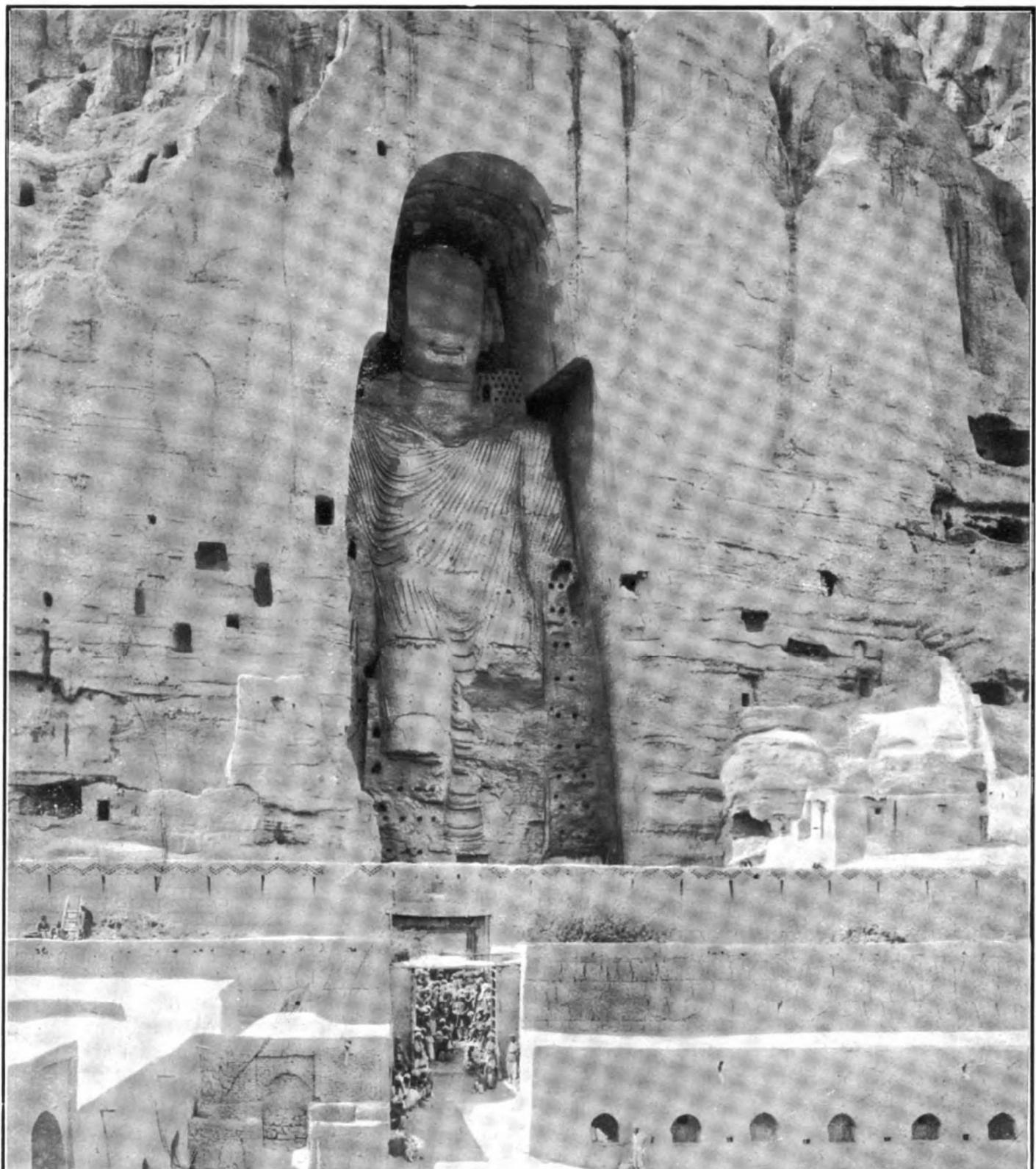






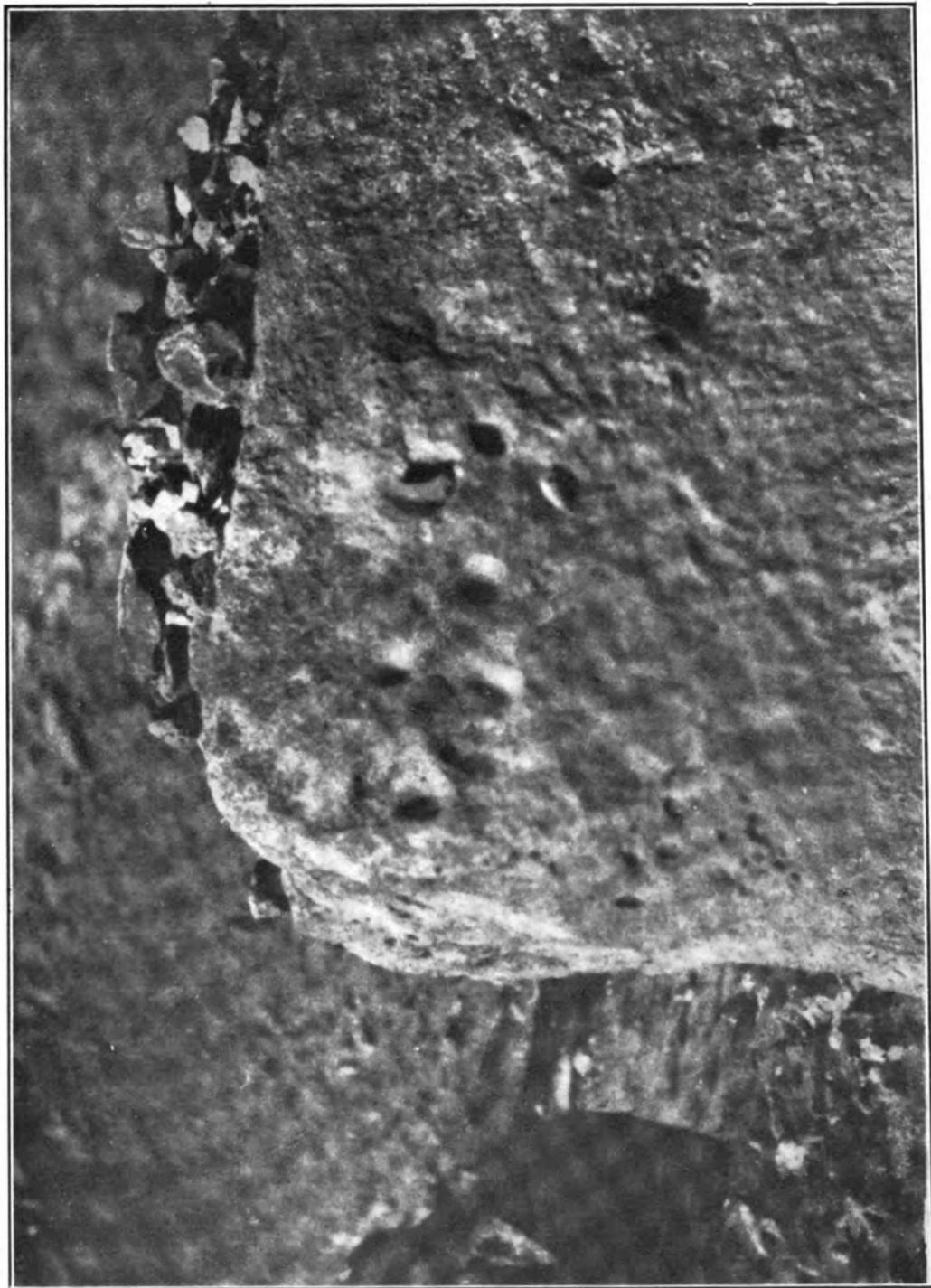












H. H. Hayden, photo.  
CUP-MARKS ON LIMESTONE BLOCK about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  mile below Ak Rabat Kotal on road to Bamian.





Plate XVI.







BABAR'S TOMB IN BAGH-I-BAHAR, KABUL.

